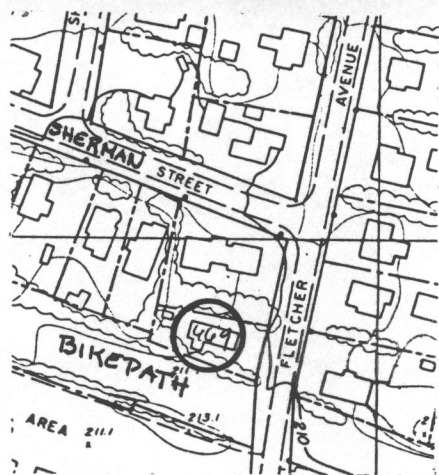


FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125



Recorded by Nancy S. Seasholes

Organization Lexington Historical Commission

Date (month / year) January 1998

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

0048000173

Boston N.

669

Town Lexington

Place (neighborhood or village)

Address 6 Fletcher Ave.

Historic Name Centre (Hancock) Engine House

Uses: Present Residence

Original Fire station

Date of Construction 1857

Source Lexington Town Reports

Style/Form Italianate cottage

Architect/Builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation Brick

Wall/Trim Asbestos shingle

Roof Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures Tool shed

Major Alterations (with dates)

Enclosed porch, shed dormers, projecting bay (dates unknown)

Condition Good

Moved ☐ no ☒ yes Date ca. 1877

Acreage 0.1 A.

Setting Next to bikepath (formerly railroad tracks) on a residential street of modest 19th-century houses with 20th-century infill

BUILDING FORM

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION ☐ *see continuation sheet*

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

6 Fletcher Ave. has lost most of its architectural integrity but is significant as one of two former fire stations in Lexington (the other one is now the V.F.W. post at 2 Hayes Ln. [MHC #667]) and the only one built in the 1850s. The house is rectangular, 1½ stories, two-by-three bays, and front-gabled with a small ridge chimney. It is set on a brick foundation, clad with asbestos shingles, and roofed with asphalt shingles. The entry is on the facade in an enclosed porch; windows are 6/6 double hung sash. In addition to the porch, other additions are shed dormers and a projecting three-sided bay on the south elevation. The only original exterior finish is the very simple molding at the cornice and on the cornice returns. The fire engine door must have been on the front, for the 1875 map indicates that when this building was on Waltham St. it was set with its gable end toward the street.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE ☒ *see continuation sheet*

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

This cottage was built in 1857 as the new fire "engine house" in Lexington Center, located in the yard of the Hancock School on Waltham Street. It replaced an engine house built in 1829 on the Common for one of Lexington's first "hand tubs," a hand-drawn wooden water tub on wheels with a foot-operated pump (an engine house was also built in 1829 in East Lexington for the other hand tub). In 1852 the engine house on the Common was moved to the schoolyard on Waltham Street after the new Hancock School had been built there in 1851. (The Hancock School was on the west side of Waltham Street approximately where the entrance to the town parking lot is now located. The engine house was on the north side of the school and both buildings were at the back of the lot, probably in the area of the present parking lot and not next to the building in the adjacent lot on the north—the Greek Revival house now at 55 Waltham St. (MHC #22).

In 1856 the town decided to purchase two hand-drawn "suction" fire engines, which sucked water up from some nearby source, and to house them by expanding the East Lexington engine house and building a new one in the center. The latter was constructed in 1857 on the site of the old one for \$452.11, which, after the old engine house was sold for \$15.00, cost the town a total of \$437.11. The new center engine house, manned by the newly-formed Hancock Engine Company Number Two, was used for 20

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES ☒ *see continuation sheet*

- Beers, F. W. *County Atlas of Middlesex Massachusetts*. New York: J.B. Beers & Co., 1875. Lexington Center plate.
- Clippings book. Scrapbook of late 1940s–early 1950s clippings from *Lexington Minute-man*. "Fire Dept." In possession of Nancy S. Seasholes, Lexington, Mass.
- Lexington Town Reports*. 1852–53, 20; 1856–57, 21–23; 1857–58, 18; for Year Ending Jan. 31, 1875, 40, 44–45; for Year Ending Jan. 31, 1876, 27, 29; for Year Ending Jan. 31, 1877, 39; for Year Ending Jan. 31, 1878, 19.
- Rosenthal, Eric. "A History of the Lexington Fire Department in the 19th Century." Paper submitted to the Lexington Savings Bank Essay Contest 100th Anniversary, 1 May 1971. Cary Library, Lexington, Mass. Photocopy.
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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town
Lexington

Property Address
6 Fletcher Ave.

Area(s) Form No.

	669
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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (continued)

years. In 1874, however, the town purchased a "Babcock Fire Extinguisher," a hand-drawn chemical engine in which soda and acid were mixed to form a fire retardant, and in 1875 the town's first hook and ladder wagon. To house the new equipment, the town built a new center engine house on Meriam Street. The land was purchased in 1875 and the Hancock and Wentworth companies (the latter operated the chemical engine) moved into the new fire house in the spring of 1876. (The Meriam Street engine house served as the Central Fire Station until 1947. The second story was then moved to 2 Hayes Lane [MHC #667] where it is now the V.F.W. Hall).

After the engine house on Waltham Street was vacated in 1876 it was moved to its present location on Fletcher Avenue. The *Town Reports* for 1877 record that the "Old Engine House" was sold that year for \$90.00 and it was probably moved soon afterward, for the 1889 map of Lexington Center shows a building in this location on Fletcher Avenue. After the move to Fletcher Avenue, the house apparently became a residence.

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- Sasher, F. Leonard. *A History of the Lexington Massachusetts Fire Department*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Firefighters Union, 1977. 1, 3.
- Walker, George H. & Co. *Atlas of Middlesex County*. Boston: George H. Walker & Co., 1889. Lexington Center plate.
- Worthen, Edwin B. Notes on buildings burned, torn down, and moved. "Houses" file, Worthen Collection. Cary Library, Lexington, Mass.
- . *A Calendar History of Lexington, Massachusetts, 1620–1946*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Savings Bank, 1946. 56, 66, 67, 77, 78, 79.
- . *Tracing the Past in Lexington, Massachusetts*. New York: Vantage Press, 1998. 16.